**Silent Discussion**

**RDG 675: Writing Mini Lesson**

**Julia Palaia**

The silent discussion offers an alternative to the oral discussion for students to discuss controversial/deep topics. It is an ideal method of beginning discussion on an issue. Students are encouraged to respond, through writing, to a series of statements related to a piece of writing or a subject topic. This activity is successful with students who are able to express through writing (grades 2 and up)

**The benefits of the silent discussion**:

* Allows quiet time for the students to form their thoughts and opinions.
* Enables students to express there opinions openly.
* Eliminates the possibility of immediate negative rebuttal.

**Lesson Procedure:**

1. Post 4-8 discussion questions/passages/quotes relating to the topic. These may be teacher or student created. Questions need to be of the type that will stimulate discussion.
2. Post each question on a piece of chart paper and place all papers at various locations around the room.
3. Students travel SILENTLY around the room, choosing 3 or 4 questions to respond to. Students write their responses silently.
4. Students are encouraged to read first responses and provide counter-responses.
5. Encourage students to explain WHY they feel that way and to offer examples, anecdotes, or exceptions.
6. When the silent discussion is complete, have students read and summarize the main ideas posted on each paper.

**Suggestions:**

* Set time limits for students to remain at one post. Allow additional time for the first responders.(5-15minutes)
* Decide whether each student will identify him/herself on each comment/response. You may wish to use this as an arena to sound out ideas without having to take ownership of them.
* Play music to encourage the silence.

**Variations**

* Use as an introduction to a unit to introduce key concepts or areas of study.
* Use as a tool to clarify or to draw attention to language.
* Use the comments generated from the introduction of a unit as a prompt for a

“talk back” essay.

* This reflective exercise, used as a post-reading strategy, helps to prepare

students who are about to write **expository** or **persuasive** essays. This

discussion about a novel may elicit deeper thinking related to specific

issues and themes within the text.

(http://imploder.blogspot.com/2007/05/writing-vs-talking.html)